

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) An in-line formed, non-laminated, air laid web, the web having major surfaces in the X-Y plane and a depth in the Z direction, the web suitable for use as a composite fluid distribution and fluid retention layer in a disposable personal care product, comprising:

a) a plurality of intermingled lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas coexisting and distributed in at least a central region of web, the lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas crossing the X axis or Y axis, or both, of the web;

b) the higher basis weight areas being a greater thickness in the Z-direction than the lower basis weight areas;

c) the web having no discrete or disturbed material boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas, whereby whole fibers exist at the boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas;

d) the web further containing superabsorbent materials; and

e) further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with greater hydrophilicity in the lower areas of the web; and

f) the web being integrally formed.

2.- 10. (canceled)

11. (previously presented) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 1, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with fiber denier in the upper areas of the web larger than fiber denier in the lower areas of the web.

12. (canceled)

13. (currently amended) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim ~~12~~11, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with different pulps in the upper areas of the web than in the lower areas of the web.

14. (previously presented) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 13, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with different superabsorbents in the upper areas of the web than in the lower areas of the web.

15.-20. (canceled)

21. (currently amended) An in-line formed, non-laminated web, the web having major surfaces in the X-Y plane and a depth in the Z direction, the web suitable for

use as a composite fluid distribution and fluid retention layer in a disposable personal care product, comprising:

a) a plurality of a lower basis weight stripes alternating with a plurality of second higher basis weight stripes in at least a central region of web, the alternations crossing at least one major axis in the plane of the web;

b) the higher basis weight stripes being a greater thickness in the Z-direction than the lower basis weight stripes;

c) the web having no discrete or disturbed material boundaries between the lower basis weight stripes and the higher basis weight stripes, whereby whole fibers exist at the boundaries between the lower basis weight stripes and the higher basis weight stripes; and

d) the web further containing superabsorbent materials wherein the higher basis weight stripes have a zone of a low concentration of absorbent material and a zone of a high concentration of absorbent material alternating in the machine direction; and

e) the web being integrally formed.

22. (currently amended) An in-line formed, non-laminated web, the web having major surfaces in the X-Y plane and a depth in the Z direction, the web suitable for use as a composite fluid distribution and fluid retention layer in a disposable personal care product, comprising:

a) a plurality of a lower basis weight stripes alternating with a plurality of second higher basis weight stripes in at least a central region of web, the alternations crossing at least one major axis in the plane of the web;

b) the higher basis weight stripes being a greater thickness in the Z-direction than the lower basis weight stripes;

c) the web having no discrete or disturbed material boundaries between the lower basis weight stripes and the higher basis weight stripes, whereby whole fibers exist at the boundaries between the lower basis weight stripes and the higher basis weight stripes; and

d) the web further containing superabsorbent materials wherein the higher basis weight stripes have a zone of a low concentration of absorbent material and a zone of a high concentration of absorbent material alternating in the cross direction; and

e) the web being integrally formed.

23. (previously presented) An in-line formed, non-laminated, air laid web, the web having major surfaces in the X-Y plane and a depth in the Z direction, the web suitable for use as a composite fluid distribution and fluid retention layer in a disposable personal care product, comprising:

a) a plurality of intermingled lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas coexisting and distributed in at least a central region of web, the lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas crossing the X axis or Y axis, or both, of the web;

b) the higher basis weight areas being a greater thickness in the Z-direction than the lower basis weight areas;

c) the web having no discrete or disturbed material boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas, whereby whole fibers exist at the boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas;

d) the web further containing superabsorbent materials and further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with fiber denier in the upper areas of the web larger than fiber denier in the lower areas of the web.

24. (currently amended) An in-line formed, non-laminated, air laid web, the web having major surfaces in the X-Y plane and a depth in the Z direction, the web suitable for use as a composite fluid distribution and fluid retention layer in a disposable personal care product, comprising:

a) a plurality of intermingled lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas coexisting and distributed in at least a central region of web, the lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas crossing the X axis or Y axis, or both, of the web;

b) the higher basis weight areas being a greater thickness in the Z-direction than the lower basis weight areas;

c) the web having no discrete or disturbed material boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas, whereby whole fibers exist at the boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas;

d) the web further containing superabsorbent materials and further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with greater hydrophilicity in the lower areas of the web; and

e) the web being integrally formed.

25. (previously presented) An in-line formed, non-laminated, air laid web, the web having major surfaces in the X-Y plane and a depth in the Z direction, the web suitable for use as a composite fluid distribution and fluid retention layer in a disposable personal care product, comprising:

a) a plurality of intermingled lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas coexisting and distributed in at least a central region of web, the lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas crossing the X axis or Y axis, or both, of the web;

b) the higher basis weight areas being a greater thickness in the Z-direction than the lower basis weight areas;

c) the web having no discrete or disturbed material boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas, whereby whole fibers exist at the boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas;

d) the web further containing superabsorbent materials and further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with different pulps in the upper areas of the web than in the lower areas of the web.

26. (previously presented) An in-line formed, non-laminated, air laid web, the web having major surfaces in the X-Y plane and a depth in the Z direction, the web suitable for use as a composite fluid distribution and fluid retention layer in a disposable personal care product, comprising:

a) a plurality of intermingled lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas coexisting and distributed in at least a central region of web, the lower basis weight areas and higher basis weight areas crossing the X axis or Y axis, or both, of the web;

b) the higher basis weight areas being a greater thickness in the Z-direction than the lower basis weight areas;

c) the web having no discrete or disturbed material boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas, whereby whole fibers exist at the boundaries between the lower basis weight areas and the higher basis weight areas;

d) the web further containing superabsorbent materials and further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with different superabsorbents in the upper areas of the web than in the lower areas of the web.

27. (new) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 23, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with greater hydrophilicity in the lower areas of the web.

28. (new) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 27, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with different pulps in the upper areas of the web than in the lower areas of the web.

29. (new) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 28, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with different superabsorbents in the upper areas of the web than in the lower areas of the web.

30. (new) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 25, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with fiber denier in the upper areas of the web larger than fiber denier in the lower areas of the web.

31. (new) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 30, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with greater hydrophilicity in the lower areas of the web.

32. (new) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 31, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with different superabsorbents in the upper areas of the web than in the lower areas of the web.

33. (new) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 26, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with fiber denier in the upper areas of the web larger than fiber denier in the lower areas of the web.

34. (new) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 33, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with greater hydrophilicity in the lower areas of the web.

35. (new) The in-line formed, non-laminated web of Claim 34, further having upper and lower areas as distinguished in the Z direction of the web, with different pulps in the upper areas of the web than in the lower areas of the web.